

CHAPTER I

ISLAM—A TRUE RELIGION OF LOVE

ISLAM IS TRULY A RELIGION OF LOVE. IT IS A SUBJECT THAT PERTAINS TO the comprehensive perception of Islam. The basic thought of Islamic teachings, in its form and contents, generates from the same theme. Love and compassion in Islam pivots on three entities:

1. Allah ﷻ
2. His Messenger ﷺ
3. Islamic teachings

The attributes of Allah ﷻ are countless and infinite; they cannot be encompassed. In the Qur'ān, the attribute that has been employed to manifest His Essence, faith in Oneness, Divinity and Providence is the attribute of *rahma*—mercy. *Rahma*, however, takes its root from love, as mercy is shown out of love alone.

In like manner, the exalted personage of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Prophethood and Messengership is not only immersed in love for humankind, but also permeated with the dominance of love over the entire creation. Whether it is the Qur'ān or the injunctions and conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the description of love, compassion and mercy is evident abundantly everywhere.

As for the *Dīn* of Islam, Allah ﷻ has kneaded its injunctions and teachings in mercy, love, compassion, gentleness, kindness, benevolence, forgiveness and forbearance—the basics of religion. Love is the soil from which all the Islamic teachings grow and blossom. We find that in the complete teachings, affection, kindness, forgiveness, benevolence and forbearance take their form from love. We can also appreciate that the commands and prohibitions enshrined in Islamic law also aim at facilitating human behaviour and conduct in the perspective of the limitations inherent in human nature. This convenience and facility is a spontaneous expression of Islam's love for humankind. What could be a greater evidence of Islam's being a religion of love than both the Prophethood and Messengerhood of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ, as well as the teachings of Islam, are predicated on the concept of love and mercy?

1.1 THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE ON ALLAH'S ATTRIBUTES

While demonstrating His different attributes in the Qur'ān, Allah mentioned the top attributes are based on love. Allah says:

﴿هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ﴾

*Allah is He apart from Whom there is no God: (the Real) King, the Most Pure of all shortcomings, Perfectly Free from all imperfections (and the Bestower of Peace), the Giver of security and protection (and the Attester of the Messengers by means of Miracles), the Guardian and Watchful.*¹

Along with His own Name, Allah has first mentioned three attributes:

1. Bestower of security
2. Granter of peace
3. Protector from every fear, terror and horror

Contemplating all of the attributes, the most salient and dominant among all His attributes are the ones which confer peace, security, protection, mercy and compassion. Indispensably, these attributes are based on love. He provides peace and protection, for He loves His creatures. He protects from every fear and terror, for He does not want His beloved servants to fall prey to any peril. Hence, the protection is prevailing through love. Therefore, whichever of His attributes Allah wills to imbue in our mind, He has spread the same concept on the teachings of Islam.

1.2 LOVE AND FORGIVENESS—THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Allah has described two of His attributes in *sūra al-Burūj*:

﴿وَهُوَ الْعَفْوَورُ الْوَدُودُ﴾

¹ Qur'ān, 59:23.

﴿And He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Loving.﴾¹

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ mentioned these attributes and ordained us to absorb these divine traits into ourselves. The exalted saint Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī has also expounded the same teaching in his famous axiom:

تَخَلَّقَا بِأَخْلَاقِ اللَّهِ الْجَمِيلَةِ.

Take the colour of divine hue.²

That is what servitude and obedience is about. We should look into how far we possess the divine attribute of forgiveness in ourselves and how much we forgive others, while realizing that Allah has described His attribute as one who is “Most Forgiving”.

This contains a message of wisdom. The two attributes are put together by Allah due to a reason – there is a connection of meaning between the two. How and why does He forgive? The answer lies in the second attribute: He loves. The One who forgives loves.

The style the Qur’ān has adopted to manifest Allah’s love for His creatures demands that those who benefit from His fountain of mercy and benevolence should also take His hue and become an embodiment of love and forgiveness for the whole of His Creation. Allah wants us to forgive people as He does Himself and, whether friends or foes, all should be shown mercy and compassion. If His servants cannot overlook others’ wrongs and errors, how should they expect forgiveness from their Lord? If they fail to love people and show them mercy, how can they expect the same from Allah ﷻ and look forward to His love and benevolence? Why should the servants beg for sustenance if they deny the same to others? Why should they kindle their hearts with the ray of hope that they will be blessed with divine favours if they themselves do not display excellent morals, conducts, profitability and generosity to the people? How is it possible that they are coercive and stringent towards the people of community, subject them to oppression, barbarism, terrorism and make them tremble, and bring

¹ Ibid., 85:14.

² Abū Nu’aym, *ilya al-awliyā’*, 9:351.

bloody account of deeds full of sins for the massacres and carnage they perpetrate; but carry no fear, yet expect mercy and forgiveness from their Lord? This cannot be possible.

Allah says: If you seek Me to be Merciful and Forgiving towards you, then you also must become the embodiment of kindness and benevolence. If you seek my love, love others, if you seek peace, then peace should be given to every grieved and distressed, if you seek to be free of fear in My Presence, then free others from the fear of your wrongs and evil deeds. Your presence, your lives, and your mode of conduct should remove the fear and worries from people, provide them with peace, and guarantee protection to others. Even a wrongdoer should be able to receive forgiveness from you.

In a hadith report, Sahl b. Sa'd رضي الله عنه narrates that he heard the Prophet ﷺ saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَرِيمٌ، يُحِبُّ الْكَرَمَ وَمَعَالِيَ الْأَخْلَاقِ، وَيَبْغُضُ سَفْسَافَهَا.

“Indeed, Allah is generous and He loves generosity and excellent morals and hates inferior morals.”¹

Allah wants us to learn from the love-laden Islamic teachings to live with the concept of hatred for the disease, not for the patient suffering from it. If you hate the patient, what will he do? Guard yourselves from sufferings, but never from the sufferers, for who will mend their broken hearts if you will distant yourself? In like manner, one should hate the sins, but not the sinners, for if you hate them, who will steer them to the straight path? Indeed, one should avoid worries, but not the worriers. Embrace them. If you push them away, then you must fear the Lord when He will push you away in worries. He will then deny you His compassion! What will you do then? He will say: You did not show mercy to My servants, so today I do not show mercy to you. When you were in the world, people were scared of you. How can you beg Me for the wealth of peace and calmness today? This is in fact the message of love that Allah ﷻ has delivered to humankind

¹ Set forth by •al- ākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 1:111 §51. •Ibn Rāshid in *al-Jāmi'*, 11:143 §20150. •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 3:131 §151. •al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 10:191 §20570.

through His mercy, divinity and Providence. Allah ﷻ has revealed in the Qur'an:

﴿وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

﴿[They] sublimates their anger and tolerate (the faults of the) people; and Allah loves those who are benevolent.﴾¹

It means that when people will adopt these traits, they will become people of benevolence and excellence. Allah has specified His mercy for the benevolent.

With regard to love, Allah's glory is twofold:

1. He is a lover.
2. He is also a beloved.

He loves all of His Creation and His Creation loves Him reciprocally. This reveals the glory of Him being a beloved.

Love in this way plays a fundamental and key role in the *Dīn* of Islam. Professing faith devoid of love is no faith. A belief not established on love finds no place in Islam. The Qur'an has revealed:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ﴾

﴿Those who believe, love Allah the most (far more intensely than anyone else).﴾²

Here Allah ﷻ has declared love as a sign of the believers. Love is not the creation of a mundane mortal; the Lord of the universe has Himself created it, and He alone manifested it first. He wants to see a bond of love between Him and His creatures:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ

بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ﴾

﴿O believers! Whoever of you turns away from his *Dīn* (Religion), Allah will soon bring (in their place) a people

¹ Qur'an, 3:134.

² Ibid., 2:165.

*He will (Himself) love and who will love Him.*¹

Here we construe that Allah ﷻ has mentioned the mode of love. In reality, He alone initiates love, and loving someone is a divine practice. When He loves someone from His creation, the servant reciprocates. Hence, it is Allah's ﷻ love that begets the servant's response. The servant's love is conditioned on Allah's ﷻ love. Divine love, therefore, precedes servant's love. Allah ﷻ chooses a heart to imbue with His love and then He loves them.

Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ wrote to Salama b. Mukhallad:

فَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا عَمِلَ بِطَاعَةِ اللَّهِ أَحَبَّهُ اللَّهُ، وَإِذَا أَحَبَّهُ اللَّهُ حَبَّبَهُ إِلَى خَلْقِهِ، وَإِذَا عَمِلَ بِمَعْصِيَةِ اللَّهِ أَبْغَضَهُ اللَّهُ، فَإِذَا أَبْغَضَهُ اللَّهُ أَبْغَضَهُ إِلَى خَلْقِهِ.

When the servant obeys Allah, He loves him, and when Allah loves him, He endears him to His creatures. But when he disobeys Allah, He hates him, and when He hates him He makes him hateful in the estimation of His creatures.²

Love brings one to ardently love each of the beloved's stances, deeds and manners. The passion for love draws a person towards absolute following; love fixes one's gaze on the beloved, and each of his stances and attributes express the love immensely.

The mother of believers, 'Ā'isha, has narrated: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent a man in charge of an expedition. Whenever he led them in prayer, he recited *sūra al-Ikhlāṣ*. When they returned, they mentioned to the Prophet about him who said, 'Ask him why he had done that.' They asked him and he answered, 'Because it contains the attribute of Most Compassionate, so I like to recite it.' Thereupon, the Prophet ﷺ said:

أَخْبِرُوهُ، أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّهُ.

"Tell him that Allah also loves him."³

¹ Ibid., 5:54.

² Set forth by •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Zuhd*, p. 197.

³ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* [The Book of Divine

This hadith has revealed that love is not a unilateral but a bilateral affair. It is demonstrated from both sides. In case of any deficiency in love on the servant's side, this results in the diminution of the glorious mercy that could have been bestowed upon him by the Lord of the universe. That person then falls into the abyss of pessimism, deprivation, disappointment and loss.

According to Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

قَالَ اللَّهُ: إِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْدِي لِقَائِي أَحْبَبْتُ لِقَاءَهُ، وَإِذَا كَرِهَ لِقَائِي كَرِهْتُ لِقَاءَهُ.

“Allah says, ‘When My slave wants to meet Me, I want to meet him. When he dislikes meeting Me, I dislike meeting him.’”¹

In another report, the mother of believers, ‘Ā’isha رضي الله عنها, narrated that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ، أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ، وَمَنْ كَرِهَ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ، كَرِهَ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ، فَقُلْتُ: يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ، أَكْرَاهِيَةَ الْمَوْتِ؟ فَكُنَّا نَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ، فَقَالَ: لَيْسَ كَذَلِكَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ إِذَا بُشِّرَ بِرَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانِهِ وَجَنَّتِهِ، أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ

Unity], chapter: “What has been reported about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, calling his community to proclaim the oneness of Allah Almighty,” 6:2686 §6940. •Muslim in *al-Shaḥīḥ, Kitāb Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn wa Qaṣru-hā* [The Book of Ritual Prayer of the Travellers and its Curtailment], chapter, “The excellent merit of reciting the Qur’ānic chapter ‘Say: He is God the One,’” 1:557 §813. •al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan, Kitāb al-Iftitāḥ* [The Book of the Commencement], chapter, “The excellent merit of reciting the Qur’ānic chapter ‘Say: He is God the One,’” 2:170 §993.

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Shaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-tawḥīd* [The Book of Divine Unity], chapter: “The words of Allah Almighty, ‘They desire to alter Allah’s words...,’” (Qur’ān 48:15), 6:2725 §7065. •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:418 §9400. •al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan, Kitāb al-janā’iz* [The Book of Funeral Rites], chapter, “Concerning someone who loves meeting Allah,” 4:10 §1835. •Mālik in *al-Muwattā’*, 1:240 §569. •Ibn ʿibbān in *al-Shaḥīḥ*, 2:84 §363. •al-Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdaws*, 3:172 §4460.

اللَّهُ، فَأَحَبَّ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ، وَإِنَّ الْكَافِرَ إِذَا بُشِّرَ بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ وَسَخَطِهِ، كَرِهَ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ، وَكَرِهَ اللَّهُ لِقَاءَهُ.

“He who loves to meet Allāh, Allāh loves to meet him, and he who dislikes to meet Allāh, Allāh dislikes to meet him.” I (‘Ā’isha) said: “O Allāh’s Apostle, does it refer to one’s disliking of death? We all have this feeling (of disliking death as an instinct).” Thereupon he (the Prophet) said: “It is not that (which you construe); when a believer (at the time of death) is given the glad tidings of the mercy of Allāh, His Pleasure and Paradise, he loves to meet Allāh, and Allāh also loves to meet him. However, when a disbeliever is given the news of the torment at the Hand of Allāh and hardship by Him, he dislikes to meet Allāh and Allāh also dislikes to meet him.”¹

Allah Most Kind keeps His attention on His servants at all times. He looks forward to the servants turning towards Him. When a servant turns toward His Lord and Guardian and expresses his immense love, then in return, Allah ﷻ showers many times greater love on the servant and showers upon him His blessings and favours. The consciousness of this immense divine love can cause someone to become indifferent to this world and lose himself to the longing for Him and His love.

This reveals that Allah is not only our beloved, but He loves His servant first. The Qur’ān says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ﴾

﴿O believers! Whoever of you turns away from his Dīn

¹ Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-dhikr wa al-du‘ā’ wa al-tawba wa al-istighfār* [The Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness], chapter, “He who loves to meet Allāh, Allāh loves to meet him, and he who dislikes to meet Allāh, Allāh abhors to meet him,” 4:2065 §2684. •Mundhirī in *al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb*, 4:171 §5297.

(Religion), Allah will soon bring (in their place) a people
He will (Himself) love and who will love Him.¹

The following hadith report narrated by Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه unfolds how Allah ﷻ responds to His servants' advance for love:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالَ: إِذَا تَلَقَّانِي عَبْدِي بِشِيرٍ، تَلَقَّيْتُهُ بِذِرَاعٍ. وَإِذَا تَلَقَّانِي بِذِرَاعٍ، تَلَقَّيْتُهُ بِبَاعٍ، وَإِذَا تَلَقَّانِي بِبَاعٍ، جِئْتُهُ أَتَيْتُهُ بِأَسْرَعٍ.

Allah says, "When My servant draws near to Me by the span of a palm, I draw near him by the cubit, and if he draws near Me by the cubit, I draw near him by the space (covered by) two hands. And if he walks towards Me, I rush towards him (Allah bestows upon His servants more than his striving)."²

This advance towards Allah ﷻ goes farther into the Hereafter where the Most Kind Lord will bless His beloved servants to express their love for Him.

According to Mu'adh b. Jabal رضي الله عنه, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنْ شِئْتُمْ أَنْبَأْتُكُمْ مَا أَوَّلُ مَا يَقُولُ اللَّهُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَمَا أَوَّلُ مَا يَقُولُونَ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. قُلْنَا: نَعَمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ: هَلْ أَحْبَبْتُمْ لِقَائِي؟ فَيَقُولُونَ: نَعَمْ يَا رَبَّنَا. فَيَقُولُ: لِمَ؟ فَيَقُولُونَ: رَجَوْنَا عَفْوَكَ وَمَغْفِرَتَكَ. فَيَقُولُ: قَدْ وَجَبَتْ لَكُمْ مَغْفِرَتِي.

"If you wish, I will tell you the first thing God would say to the believers on the Day of Resurrection and the first thing they would say to Him." We said: 'Yes, Messenger of Allah.'

¹ Qur'an, 5:54.

² Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Shahih: Kitāb al-dhikr wa al-du'ā' wa al-tawba wa al-istighfār* [The Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness], chapter, "Urging on the recollection of Allah Most High," 4:2061 §2675. •Ahmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:316 §8178 & 3:283 §14045.

Then he said that God would say to the believers, 'Did you wish to meet Me?' They would reply, 'Yes, our Lord.' He would ask them why, and they would reply, 'It was because we hoped for Your forgiveness and pardon.' He would then say, 'My forgiveness has become necessary for you.'"¹

Hence, the servants who spent their term on earth inundated in the passion of love for their Lord will be rewarded in the Hereafter with forgiveness and emancipation. They will also be honoured with the blessing of conversing with Allah ﷻ Most High. This exaltation is the pleasant outcome of the love for Allah ﷻ, the foundation of the edifice of Islam.

1.3 THE GRACE OF LOVE IS SENT FROM THE HEAVENS

Allah establishes a unique link with those whom He chooses for His love. He does not keep His love to Himself, but He makes all others join Him in His love for that servant. According to Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ الْعَبْدَ، نَادَى جِبْرِيلُ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ فُلَانًا فَأَحِبُّهُ. فَيَحِبُّهُ جِبْرِيلُ، فَيُنَادِي جِبْرِيلُ فِي أَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ فُلَانًا فَأَحِبُّوه. فَيَحِبُّهُ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ، ثُمَّ يُوضَعُ لَهُ الْقَبُولُ فِي الْأَرْضِ.

"If Allah loves the servant, He calls Gabriel (and ordains): 'Allah loves So-and-so, so you must love him!' Gabriel will love him, so Gabriel will proclaim to the people of heaven: 'Allah loves So-and-so, so you must love him!' The people of heaven will therefore love him, and acceptance is then imbued in (the hearts of) the people on earth."²

¹ Set forth by •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:238 §22125. •Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 20:125 §251.

² Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb Badʾ al-Khalq* [The Book of the Beginning of Creation], chapter: "Concerning the angels," 3/1175 §3037, & *Kitāb al-Adab* [The Book of Proper Conduct], chapter: "Compassionate love from Allah u," 5/2246 §5693. •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣila wa al-Ādāb* [The Book of Piety, Affinity and Good Manners], chapter: "If Allah

Why does Allah love that servant? It is because that the servant also seeks His pleasure and keeps His pleasure a priority at all times and in all his acts. Therefore, he is enveloped in the mercy of Allah in lieu of his love and sincerity of his intention.

According to Thawbān رضي الله عنه, Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَلْتَمِسُ مَرْضَاةَ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَزَالُ بِذَلِكَ. فَيَقُولُ اللَّهُ لِجَبْرِئِيلَ: إِنَّ فُلَانًا عَبْدِي يَلْتَمِسُ أَنْ يُرَضِّيَنِي؛ أَلَا، وَإِنَّ رَحْمَتِي عَلَيْهِ. فَيَقُولُ جَبْرِئِيلُ: رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى فُلَانٍ وَيَقُولُهَا حَمَلَةُ الْعَرْشِ وَيَقُولُهَا مَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ حَتَّى يَقُولَهَا أَهْلُ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ، ثُمَّ تَهْبِطُ لَهُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ.

Indeed, a servant seeks the pleasure of Allah and strives for it uninterrupted. Then Allah says to Gabriel, "My servant so-and-so seeks My pleasure. Be aware of it! Certainly, My mercy is upon him." Gabriel says, "Allah's mercy is upon so and so," and the bearers of the Throne and the angels who are around them also say the same; even the inhabitants of the seven heavens say the same. After that, it comes down to the earth (refers to the inhabitants of earth who also say that so-and-so has Allah's mercy upon him).¹

1.4 THE ORIGIN OF DIVINITY IS ALSO LOVE

Allah's love is not specified for the believers alone. He declared himself a lover. Whether the Creation loves Him or not, He loves all of His Creation, as the first verse of the Qur'ān implies: 'I am the Lord of all the worlds and the Creation.' He has not said even once in the Qur'ān: 'I am the Lord of the believers.' Rather He says, 'I am the Lord of all the worlds, galaxies, and all the creation.'

Lord means the Sustainer, the One who Exalts, the One who raises someone from a very simple and original stage to an honoured

loves a servant, He endears him to His servants," 4/2030 §2637. •Mālik in *al-Muwatṭa'*, 2/953 §1710.

¹ Set forth by •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:279 §22454. •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, 2:57 §1240.

stage. The fact is that to make one sublime is only possible through the merciful, compassionate and benevolent attention of the Most Sublime. Hence, it is proven that love is the basis of all the processes of improvement. Nurturing is simply impossible without love and affection.

When you kick off the training and development phenomena, you have to commence with love and compassion. The whole process of nurturing and enhancement rests on the most effective of all the factors—love. Take, for example, parents. They cannot bring up and nurture their children without giving them their due love and affection. The mother's role has greater significance towards the upbringing of children solely due to her greater degree of love and mercy for the children than the father. She nurses them at the cost of her own blood, and to soothe them she endures her own discomfort. If she is devoid of love for her children, then how could she accomplish the various phases of a child's development?

The mother nourishes the children and nurses them, for she loves them. The child wets her bed, but she keeps the child dry and secure. She even sleeps on the wet bed and keeps her child on her chest. When the child cries, she stays up all night, for she is an embodiment of love.

Allah ﷻ has also endowed animals with love. For this reason, even a sparrow feeds its offspring; it pecks the grains and puts them into their mouths! Had the animals been barren of love, no species of animals could ever bring up their offspring. The process of sustaining and nourishing can never be possible without love. When no creation can nourish anything without love, imagine how immense the love of Allah is as the Sustainer of the whole universe!

Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrates that he heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ say:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ الرَّحْمَةَ يَوْمَ خَلَقَهَا مِائَةً رَحْمَةً، فَأَمْسَكَ عَنْدَهُ تِسْعًا وَتِسْعِينَ رَحْمَةً وَأَرْسَلَ فِي خَلْقِهِ كُلِّهِمْ رَحْمَةً وَاحِدَةً، فَلَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْكَافِرُ بِكُلِّ الَّذِي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ لَمْ يَبْتَئِسْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ، وَلَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ بِكُلِّ الَّذِي عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ لَمْ يَأْمَنْ مِنَ النَّارِ.

“Allāh created mercy on the day He created one hundred

parts of mercy. He retained ninety-nine parts with Him and sent one part to all His creation. If the unbeliever had known of all the mercy that is with Allāh, He would not have despaired of the Garden. If the believer had known of all the punishment which Allāh has, he would not have felt safe from the Fire.”¹

In another tradition, Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrates that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مِائَةَ رَحْمَةٍ. أَنْزَلَ مِنْهَا رَحْمَةً وَاحِدَةً بَيْنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالْبَهَائِمِ وَالْهَوَامِّ. فِيهَا يَتَعَاطَفُونَ بِهَا يَتَرَاحَمُونَ وَبِهَا تَعَطَّفُ الْوَحْشُ عَلَى وَلَدِهَا. وَأَخَّرَ اللَّهُ تِسْعًا وَتِسْعِينَ رَحْمَةً يَرْحَمُ بِهَا عِبَادَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

“Allah has one hundred parts of mercy. Of these, He sent one part that is shared between humankind and jinn and animals and insects. Because of this one part shared between them, they show mutual affection and mercy, and due to it, the wild beast shows mercy to her young. Allah has reserved the remaining ninety-nine parts of mercy which He will have upon His servants on the Day of Resurrection.”²

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-riqāq* [The Book of Heart-softening Narrations], chapter: “Hope together with fear,” 5:2374 §6104. •Muslim in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-tawba* [The Book of Contrition], chapter: “The vastness of Allah’s mercy and that it outstrips His wrath,” 4:2109 §2755. •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Da’awāt ‘an Rasūl Allāh a* [The Book of Invocations from Allāh’s Messenger a], chapter: “Allāh Created One Hundred Mercies,” 5:549 §3542.

² Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Tawba* [The Book of Repentance], chapter: “The Vastness of Allah’s Mercy and That His Mercy Precedes His Wrath,” 4:2108 §2752; •Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 2:434 §9607; •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Da’awāt ‘an Rasūl Allāh a* [The Book of Invocations from Allāh’s Messenger a], chapter: “Allāh Created One Hundred Mercies,” 5:549 §3541; •Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Zuhd* [The Book of the Renunciation], chapter: “Hope for Allāh’s Mercy on the Day of Resurrection,” 2:1435 §4293; •Abū Ya’lā in *al-Musnad*, 11:258; 328 §6372; 6445.

Therefore, the humans, animals or birds, whoever Allah ﷻ has assigned to bringing up the offspring, He has endowed them with deep love as virtual nourishers and sustainers for their offspring. As for Him being a real Sustainer, He has launched a system of sustenance immersed in love and mercy for all the universe and for all the creation. He equally loves all, whether they are humans or animals and birds, believers or non-believers, polytheists or monotheists, angels or the other creation of the universe. Whoever they are, Allah is all mercy and compassion towards them. He brings everything up from its origin and develops it into full bloom, for He is the Lord of all the worlds.

This is also Allah's expression of love and mercy for His creation – that wherever His Creation exists, He provides them with the resources of giving birth, living and protecting the life from every danger and loss. If there were no love and affection, no growth and development could transpire. Wherever the system of nurturing exists, mercy and love of the Lord compulsorily flow there.

1.5 DIVINE ADDRESS TO THE SINFUL

The spectacle of love can be discerned when Allah Oft-Relenting, Ever-Merciful talks to His sinful servants in *sūra al-Zumur* of the Qur'ān:

﴿قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

﴿Say: 'O servants of Mine who have wronged their souls,
do not lose hope of Allah's mercy. Assuredly, Allah forgives
all sins (and excesses). He is certainly Most Forgiving,
Ever-Merciful.'﴾¹

This disclosure of Allah's love and kindness to His sinful servants evidences that Allah ﷻ, through His Messenger ﷺ of mercy, has not turned His attention away from them. While addressing them, He calls them first *yā 'ibādī* (O servants of Mine). Through these words, He conveys the divine message of mercy and compassion with love for the servants before the mention of their sins.

¹ Qur'ān, 39:53.

The address to the sinners is so exhilarating and captivating; through His Messenger ﷺ, Allah has removed sorrow, distress, misery and disappointment of the sinners. Going astray due to their fear of punishment for their sins, those who were losing their balance due to disappointment and were nearly falling away from the true path became stable, and once again they attained the nearness of their Lord. Allah's mercy kindles certainty, instead of hope, like a rising sun, in their hearts. Mercy imbues their souls with certitude, and their skins soften with the wave of contentment that Allah has forgiven them their wrongs and defiance. What drenches them in serenity is the life-giving expression *yā 'ibādī* (O servants of Mine). Instead of rejection, they get admittance instilling in them firmness of faith, and they feel that, despite defiance, Allah ﷻ is still their Lord! He is Ever-Merciful!

His mercy and love is still looking for us.

This subject has been richly expressed in Prophetic traditions. Anas b. Mālik ؓ narrates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

اللَّهُ أَشَدُّ فَرَحًا بِتَوْبَةِ عَبْدِهِ حِينَ يَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ، مِنْ أَحَدِكُمْ كَانَ عَلَى رَاحِلَتِهِ
بَارَاضٍ فَلَاةٌ، فَأَنْفَلَتْ مِنْهُ، وَعَلَيْهَا طَعَامُهُ وَشَرَابُهُ، فَأَيَسَ مِنْهَا، فَأَتَى
شَجَرَةً، فَاضْطَجَعَ فِي ظِلِّهَا، قَدْ أَيَسَ مِنْ رَاحِلَتِهِ، فَبَيْنَا هُوَ كَذَلِكَ إِذَا هُوَ
بِهَا قَائِمَةٌ عِنْدَهُ، فَاخَذَ بِخِطَامِهَا، ثُمَّ قَالَ مِنْ شِدَّةِ الْفَرَحِ: اَللَّهُمَّ، أَنْتَ
عَبْدِي وَأَنَا رَبُّكَ. أَخْطَأَ مِنْ شِدَّةِ الْفَرَحِ.

“God is more pleased with the repentance of His servant when he turns penitently towards Him than one of you would be if his riding-best which was carrying his food and drink escaped from him in a waterless desert and he, despairing of recovering it, went and lay down in the shade of a tree. Then suddenly he saw it standing beside him and, seizing its halter, said from excess of joy, ‘O God, You are my servant and I am Your lord,’ making a mistake from excess of joy.”¹

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Da‘awāt* [The Book of Supplications], chapter: “Repentance,” 5:2324 §5949. •Muslim in *al-Shaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-tawba* [The Book of Penitence], chapter: “Exhorting to be penitent

According to Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī and Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمְهِلُ حَتَّى إِذَا ذَهَبَ ثُلُثُ اللَّيْلِ الْأَوَّلِ نَزَلَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا
فَيَقُولُ: هَلْ مِنْ مُسْتَغْفِرٍ؟ هَلْ مِنْ تَائِبٍ؟ هَلْ مِنْ سَائِلٍ؟ هَلْ مِنْ دَاعٍ؟
حَتَّى يَنْفَجِرَ الْفَجْرُ.

“Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when two-thirds of the night have passed and says till the dawn breaks, “Who asks pardon from Me? Who asks My forgiveness? Who asks of Me? Who supplicates Me?”¹

According to Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه:

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، إِنَّكَ مَا
دَعَوْتَنِي وَرَجَوْتَنِي، غَفَرْتُ لَكَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ فِيكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي. يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، لَوْ
بَلَغَتْ ذُنُوبُكَ عَنَانَ السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ اسْتَغْفَرْتَنِي، غَفَرْتُ لَكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي. يَا ابْنَ
آدَمَ، إِنَّكَ لَوْ أَتَيْتَنِي بِقُرَابِ الْأَرْضِ خَطَايَا ثُمَّ لَقِيتَنِي لَا تَشْرِكَ بِي شَيْئًا،
لَأَتَيْتُكَ بِقُرَابِهَا مَغْفِرَةً.

“I heard Allah’s Messenger ﷺ say: ‘Allah (Blessed and Exalted is He) has said: “O son of Adam, as long as you supplicate and seek of Me, and whatever you do, I will forgive you and that is all right with Me! O son of Adam, even if your sins reach the clouds of the sky, then you seek My forgiveness,

and extreme delight over it,” 4:2104 §2747. •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 4:283 §18515. •Abū Yaʿlā in *al-Musnad*, 3:257 §1704.

¹ Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb Ṣalāt al-Musāfirīn wa Qaṣru-hā* [The Book of Ritual Prayer of the Travellers and its Curtailment], chapter, “Exhortation to supplicate and pray,” 1:523 §758. •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 3:34 §11313. •al-Nasāʾī in *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 6:124 §10315. •Abd b. umayd in *al-Musnad*, 1:272 §861. •Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 6:72 §29556. •Abd al-Razzāq in *al-Muṣannaf*, 10:444 §19654. •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 22:370 §927.

I will forgive you, and that is all right with Me! O son of Adam, even if you bring Me errors almost sufficient to fill the earth, then you approach Me without associating anything with Me, I will grant you forgiveness sufficient to fill the earth!"¹

Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī has narrated in *al-Risāla* that Allah ﷻ revealed to the Prophet Dāwūd ﷺ:

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمُدْبِرُونَ عَنِّي، كَيْفَ انْتَظَرِي لَهُمْ وَرَفَقِي بِهِمْ وَشَوْقِي إِلَيَّ
تَرَكُ مَعَاصِيَهُمْ، لَمَاتُوا شَوْقًا إِلَيَّ، وَانْقَطَعَتْ أَوْصَالُهُمْ مِنْ مُحَبَّتِي، يَا
دَاوُدُ، هَذِهِ إِرَادَتِي فِي الْمُدْبِرِينَ عَنِّي، فَكَيْفَ إِرَادَتِي فِي مُقْبِلِينَ إِلَيَّ؟

"If those who turn their backs on Me know how I aspire (their repentance) to them and how I will bestow gentleness upon them and how much I want them to abandon their disobedience, then they would die of longing for Me and their joints would be severed from one another because of [their] love for Me. O Dāwūd! This is what I wish for those who turn their backs on Me. What, then, will My wish be for those who turn to Me?!"²

The aforementioned verses of the Qur'an and hadith reports contain the glad tidings that the Most Kind Lord has declared His unconditional and categorical forgiveness even before the sinners repent and turn to their Lord for mercy and compassion. He is the Most Forgiving, Ever-Merciful Lord. He is pleased when His servants

¹ Set forth by •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Da'awāt 'an Rasūl Allāh a* [The Book of Invocations from Allāh's Messenger a], chapter: "The excellent merit of repentance and seeking forgiveness, and what has been mentioned about Allāh's Mercy for His servants," 5:548 §3540. •ad-Dārimī in *al-Sunan*, 2:414 §2788. •Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:167 §21510-21544. •al-Ṭabarānī, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās k, in *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 12:19 §12346, & in *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, 5:337 §5483, & in *al-Mu'jam al-Saghīr*, 2:82 §820. •al-Bayhaqī, on the authority of Abū Dharr g, in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 2:17 §1042. •al-Haithamī in *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 10/216.

² Set forth by •al-Qushayrī in *al-Risāla*, p. 332.

seek His pardon and revive their link of servitude with Him. Human wisdom suggests that He should have first ordained the servants to feel penitent, pray for forgiveness, turn to Him in repentance and vow to reform so that they could be entitled to Allah's love, mercy and compassion. However, that is not the case here. They were not enjoined to feel guilty and full of remorse. They have been addressed with an infinite bestowal and in a compassionate manner that has touched their souls, stirring inside them a tumult of shame and remorse. That makes them inclined towards repentance and reform, and moves them to beg for forgiveness, rousing in them the consciousness of His benevolence, and altering their conduct into obedience instead of defiance. In like manner, a voice would rise in their hearts to turn towards Him and follow His commandments with fervent love and devotion.

1.6 LOVE IS ALSO MANIFESTED IN REWARD AND FAVOUR

When we turn to Allah's recompense and favours showered on His Creation, we find signs of His love ubiquitous. He nourishes, which amounts to His love and compassion. Similarly, the entire universe comprising the sun, moons, the earth and other sources of life, light, energy and survival that have been made subservient to us are all the manifestation of His love for us. His kindness and clemency to us is His love, compassion and benevolence with which He treats humans. How His love is manifested in the whole system of this universe affirms His love for His creation. Allah's ﷻ endless blessings and favours have been mentioned on various occasions in the Qur'an. He says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ خَلْقٍ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ
يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَآلَيْ تُؤْفَكُونَ﴾

﴿O people! Persistently remember the favour that Allah has bestowed on you. Is there any Creator other than Allah ﷻ Who may provide you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? There is no God but He. So where are you wandering, disorientated?﴾¹

¹ Qur'an, 35:3.

He has revealed on another occasion:

﴿اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ، يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ﴾

Allah ﷻ is Most Bountiful and Benevolent towards His servants. He bestows His sustenance and bounty upon whom He wills. And He is Most Strong, Almighty. ¹

Introducing to His Divinity and Sustenance in the first verse of *sūra al-Fātiḥa*, Allah ﷻ has described His attributes of mercy, *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (Most Compassionate, Ever-Merciful), in the second verse, which are in fact the expressions employed to illustrate His love and compassion. He has not mentioned any of His other attributes in the verse. The first impression He chose to etch on the human mind pertained to His traits of mercy and compassion, which are Divinity and Sustenance. The moment one pronounces Allāh, the image of *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (Most Compassionate, Ever-Merciful) is vividly depicted in the mind. With this perception, a person is then lost in the imagination of how intensely Allah loves and blesses His creation.

He is not the Sustainer of the believers alone; He also provides indiscriminately for the polytheists, the disbelievers and the defiant.

According to Abū al-Dardā' رضي الله عنه, Allah's Messenger ﷺ reported that Allah said:

إِنِّي وَالْجِنُّ وَالْإِنْسُ فِي بَيِّءٍ عَظِيمٍ، أَخْلَقْتُ وَيَعْبُدُ غَيْرِي، وَأَرْزُقُ وَيَشْكُرُ غَيْرِي.

"Humans and jinns are strange creatures in relation to Me. I create them but (many of them) worship others than Me, and I provide for them while they thank others than Me."²

This implies that whenever we mention Islam, Prophethood, Messengership, and Islamic teachings to others, the first impression

¹ Ibid., 42:19.

² Set forth by •al-Ṭabarānī in *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn*, 2:93 §974-975. •al-Bayhaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 4:134 §4563. •al-Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdaws*, 3:166 §4439.

that the listener should perceive from us is that of love, compassion, mercy, peace and calmness.

Islam is a religion of love. For this reason, Allah's attribute of mercy, *al-rahma*, that connotes His love and kindness has been mentioned in the Qur'an about three hundred times. In the same way, the attributes that characterise the Prophethood and Messengership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also generate from love and mercy. Peace, compassion and love for the creation are the spirit of all the Islamic teachings.

1.7 LOVE STIMULATES SUBMISSION TO DIVINE INJUNCTIONS

To begin with, love relates to the personality. Every stance and feature of the beloved captivates the heart. Gradually, when love shackles the lover, the lover pays attention to the actions, manners, habits, conduct and character of the beloved. Progressively, the lover is known in the society with reference to the beloved. Thus, the lover gets absorbed in everything that pertains to the beloved to avoid any blame on the beloved and negates his own identity and submits to his beloved. When the servant claims Allah's love, he proves it by abiding by His commands. The crux of the matter is the fact that love is the key of the submission to the divine commands.

Allah ﷻ has revealed:

﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتٰبِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ وَالسَّآئِلِيْنَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عٰهَدُوْا وَالصَّٰدِقِيْنَ فِي الْبَآسَاءِ وَالضَّرَآءِ وَحِيْنَ الْبَآسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوْا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ﴾

«Righteousness is not merely that you turn your faces to the east or the west. But true righteousness is that a person believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the

Book (revealed by Allah) and the Messengers. Driven by love for Allah, he spends (his) wealth on the kindred, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarers and those who ask and in (liberating slaves') necks, and establishes Prayer and pays Zakāt (the Alms-due). And when they make a promise, they fulfil it and are steadfast in hardship (i.e., poverty) and suffering (i.e., ailment) and at the time of fierce fighting (i.e., jihad). It is these who are truthful and it is these who are righteous.﴾¹

This concept of obedience and servitude kneaded in love is the hallmark of the Prophet's ﷺ exalted family. Once, our master 'Ali ؑ and the pure people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*) fasted. At the time of breaking the fast, some orphan called, for he was hungry. They gave all the food to the orphan. The next day a poor person came, and they gave the food to him and broke the fast by drinking water alone. The third day they gave away the food to a prisoner. Allah revealed on this spectacle of love:

﴿وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا﴾

﴿And they give (their own) food, in deep love of Allah, to the needy, the orphan and prisoner (out of sacrifice, despite their own desire and need for it).﴾²

It could have been said that they gave away food to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner to obey Allah's command. But according to the Qur'ān, the motivating factor was Allah's love. Obedience to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ is honoured with acceptance only when it emanates from the bond of love—the immense and ardent love. No pious deed is considered pious, nor is any act of worship regarded worship unless it springs from fervent love. The following hadith report demonstrates it:

Anas ؓ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

¹ Qur'ān, 2:177.

² Ibid., 76:8.

ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ: (وفي رواية: حَلَاوَةُ الْإِسْلَامِ) أَنْ
يَكُونَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا، وَأَنْ يُحِبَّ الْمَرْءَ لَا يُحِبُّهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ،
وَأَنْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يَعُودَ فِي الْكُفْرِ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُقْذَفَ فِي النَّارِ.
مُتَّفَقٌ عَلَيْهِ.

“If these three things are contained within a person, he will discover the sweetness of faith (in one report, the wording is: the sweetness of Islam): (1) Allah and His Messenger are dearer to him than anything apart from them. (2) When he loves a human being, he loves him only for Allah’s sake. (3) He detests (the prospect of) reverting to unbelief, just as he detests (the prospect of) being thrown into the Fire of Hell.”¹

Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said: “Whoever possess these three signs, in reality, he would taste the sweetness of faith. He is not a believer who keeps vigil all night on the prayer mat, preaches all life, or acquires the attire according to Shariah, but lacks these three things. Why? For love is the origin of these three things.”

1.8 LOVE WILL MAKE UP THE DEFICIENCY OF PIOUS DEEDS

Love, blended with proactive obedience, perfects faith. If conduct of obedience is without love, faith becomes imperfect. It does not exclude one from the ambit of faith, and the believer remains a

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Imān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: “Sweetness of Faith [*ḥalāwat al-Imān*],” 1:14 §16 & in *Kitāb al-Imān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: “Someone who detests the prospect of reverting to unbelief, just as he detests the prospect of being thrown into the Fire of Hell from faith,” 1:16 §21. •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Imān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: “Explanation of the qualities by which someone who is characterized by them discovers the sweetness of faith,” 1:66 §43. •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Imān* [The Book of Faith] according to Allah’s Messenger a, chapter: “(10), 5:15 §2624. •al-Nasā’ī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Imān wa Sharā’i’u-h* [The Book of Faith and its laws], Ch: The taste of faith, 8:94 §4987.

believer; however, his faith would be imperfect without the obedience. Contrarily, if the heaps of pious acts, high like mountains, are devoid of love, then it expels one from faith because love forms the basis of Islamic faith and teachings.

Those who lack love are the ones who only regard actions and deeds of supreme importance and negate love, considering it a tribulation of the modern times. A thorough study of the Prophetic teachings unveil that wherever Allah's Messenger ﷺ mentioned actions and deeds, the goal was to draw attention to practice and to stimulate motivation to be practical. As for love, he mentioned it to highlight its significance. That love takes away the significance of actions and deeds is a baseless notion; where is this idea from?

Allah's Messenger ﷺ called it the first stipulation of faith that the love of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ must exceed all bonds of love that exist in the universe. Here is an agreed upon hadith on who a firm believer is:

مَنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا.

"Allāh and His Messenger are dearer to him than anything else."¹

It should be remembered that those who regard mere actions as love are mistaken. Action, no doubt, perfects love, but it is not love itself. It is rather a requisite, or proviso, of love. Action is one of the essentials of love and a complement, not love itself. Love relates to the heart while action pertains to outward activity.

According to Anas b. Mālik رضي الله عنه,

أَنَّ أَعْرَابِيًّا قَالَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَتَى السَّاعَةُ، يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَا أَعْدَدْتَ لَهَا؟ قَالَ: حُبَّ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ. قَالَ: أَنْتَ مَعَ

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: "Someone who detests the prospect of reverting to unbelief, just as he detests the prospect of being thrown into the Fire of Hell from faith," 1:16 §21. •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: "Explanation of the qualities by which someone who is characterized by them discovers the sweetness of faith," 1:66 §43.

مَنْ أَحَبَّ.

“A Bedouin said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: ‘When is the Final Hour, O Messenger of Allah?’ Allah’s Messenger ﷺ asked him: ‘What have you prepared for it?’ He said: ‘The love of Allah and His Messenger. (That is the sole asset of my life.)’ He said: ‘You are together with those you love!’”¹

The indication was directed towards the point that *you love me*. Hence, insufficient pious acts should not cause you any worry. Your love for me will keep you with me on the Day of Resurrection. Abū Dharr ؓ is reported as having said: “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, a man loves some people, but he does not act as they act!” He said:

أَنْتَ، يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ، مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ. قَالَ: فَإِنِّي أُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ. قَالَ: فَإِنَّكَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ.

“O Abū Dharr, you are together with those you love!” Abū Dharr said: “I love Allah and His Messenger!” He said: “O Abū Dharr, indeed, you are together with those you love!”²

The Apostle of Allah conveyed a significant message in the above hadith. If someone loves the Messenger of Allah ﷺ but he is unable to perform good deeds abundantly, on the Day of Resurrection he will be with the Messenger.

¹ Set forth by •al- Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Adab* [Proper Conduct], chapter: “The sign of love for the sake of Allah, 3:1349 §3485. •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣila wa al-Ādāb* [Piety, Affinity and Good Manners], chapter: “The man is together with the one he loves, 4:2032 §2639. •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: al-Zuhd* [Abstinence] according to Allah’s Messenger a, chapter: “What has come to inform us that the man is together with the one he loves, 4:595 §2385.

² Set forth by •Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in *al-Musnad*, 5:166 § 21501. •Abū Dāwūd in *al-Sunan, Kitāb al-Adab* [Proper Conduct], chapter: “The man’s informing the man of his love for him,” 4:333 §5126. •al-Dārimī in *al-Sunan*, 2:414 §2787. •al-Bazzār in *al-Musnad*, 9:373 §395. •Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:315 §556. •al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 1:128 §351.

According to ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ, during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ there was a companion named ‘Abd Allāh, also known as ‘imār’. His conduct was to make Allah’s Messenger ﷺ laugh at times while the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in the gathering of his noble Companions, attending to and, solving their distresses, sorrows and sufferings.

This Companion used to see that everyone would come for their needs and no one would make Allah’s Messenger ﷺ laugh. Therefore, with the intention of keeping Allah’s Messenger ﷺ pleased and to lessen his burden and tiredness, the Companion used to say something amusing and would make the Holy Prophet ﷺ laugh. The Holy Prophet’s ﷺ smile would make this Companion happy, for he would think that the burden on the Holy Prophet ﷺ would be removed. This was his state of love and his attempt to amuse the Prophet ﷺ.

Once that Companion committed an error, and he was ordered to be lashed. After some time, he was at it again and was lashed. Due to human nature, he could not keep himself away from committing error. Once, the noble Companions, while sitting in the Prophet’s Mosque, were cursing him for how often he is brought [for lashing]. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ heard them cursing upon him, he hastily came out and said,

لَا تَلْعَنُوهُ، فَوَاللَّهِ، مَا عَلِمْتُ إِنَّهُ يُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.

“Do not invoke curses on him, for, by Allah! I know that he loves Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.”¹

Another report reads, “Do not curse him, for indeed he loves Allah and His Messenger.”

Think about the repetition of error and the punishment for the Companion. Was this repeatedly erring conduct of the Companion an expression of love for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ? If it was not an expression of love, then what was the action that expressed the love,

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al- udūd* [The Prescribed Punishments], chapter: “The Offensiveness of Cursing the One Who Drinks Alcohol, and Establishing that He is Not outside the Fold of the Religion,” 2489 §6398.

which covered his repeated errors and deficiencies and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also declared him the lover of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ? His expression of love was his action of amusing and wanting to refresh and make the Holy Prophet ﷺ laugh. This explains “love” as the love of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and as the reality of Islam.

This hadith has also brought to the fore the truth that love is the origin of faith. It is the root of the faith tree, laden with pious acts like ritual prayers, fasting, Hajj, and Zakat, which are the fruit and flowers that come to the tree. If the root of the tree remains healthy and intact, the tree may bear fruit sometimes, if not every year. If the root decays, then neither the fruit comes nor the tree stays alive.

The deficiency of pious acts is made up by love, as it drags one towards piety. Nonetheless, if the heart is devoid of the love of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then the conduct will no longer be righteous and will lead to Hell. We must, therefore, imbue our hearts with the beauty of love so that the love of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ should embellish our inner selves.

1.9 THE INJUNCTION TO LOVE THE BELOVED AND THE CHOSEN ONES

The hadith literature also describes the fundamental principle of love that, in addition to loving Allah, we must also love those favoured servants who love Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. Allah also loves them, and when we love them, Allah blesses us with His proximity.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالَ: مَنْ عَادَى لِي وَلِيًّا، فَقَدْ آذَنْتُهُ بِالْحَرْبِ. وَمَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ. وَمَا يَزَالُ عَبْدِي يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّوَافِلِ حَتَّى أُحِبَّهُ، فَإِذَا أَحَبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ، وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ، وَيَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا، وَرِجْلَهُ الَّتِي يَمْشِي بِهَا. وَإِنْ سَأَلَنِي، لَأُعْطِيَنَّهُ، وَلَئِنْ اسْتَعَاذَنِي، لَأُعِيذَنَّهُ. وَمَا تَرَدَّدْتُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ تَرَدُّدِي عَنْ نَفْسِ الْمُؤْمِنِ. يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَنَا أَكْرَهُ مَسَاءَتَهُ.

According to Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه:

“Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said: ‘Allah has said: “If someone treats a friend of Mine as an enemy, I have declared war on him. My servant does not draw near to Me by means of anything dearer to Me than that which I have made incumbent upon him. My servant does not cease to attain My nearness by means of supererogatory devotions, until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks of Me, I surely grant him, and if he appeals to Me for refuge, I surely grant him refuge. I do not vacillate about anything of which I am the Doer. My vacillation is about taking the soul of the believer. He dislikes death and I dislike his pain.”’”¹

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘ārith رضي الله عنه reported:

أَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَى دَاوُدَ عليه السلام أَنْ أَحِبَّنِي وَأَحِبَّ أَحِبَّائِي وَحَبِّبْنِي إِلَى عِبَادِي.
قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ، أُحِبُّكَ وَأَحِبُّ أَحِبَّائَكَ فَكَيْفَ أُحِبُّكَ إِلَى عِبَادِكَ؟ قَالَ:
اذْكُرُونِي هُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَذْكُرُوا مِنِّي إِلَّا خَيْرًا.

“Allah revealed to Prophet Dāwūd: ‘Love Me and love My friends and endear Me to My servants.’ So he said: ‘O My Lord, I will love You and Your friends. How can I endear You to Your servants?’ Allah said, ‘Mention Me in their presence so that they will always remember Me charged with love.’”²

Abū Mūsā al-Daylamī reported that once he heard someone inquire

¹ Set forth by •al- Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Riqāq* [The Softening of Hearts], chapter: “Humility, 5:2384 §6137. •Ibn Hibbān in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:58 §347. •al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 10:219, & in *Kitāb al-Zuhd al-Kabīr*, 2:269 §696.

² Set forth by •Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 7:68 §34254. •Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in *al-Awliyā*, 1:48–49 §29. •al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 6:1 §7668. •al-Daylamī, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās g, in *Musnad al-Firdaws*, 3:5 §4543.

from Imam Abū Yazīd al-Buṣṭāmī to apprise him of a deed to attain Allah's nearness. Thereupon he said:

أَحِبُّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى لِجُبُوكَ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِ أَوْلِيَائِهِ،
فَلَعَلَّهُ أَنْ يَنْظُرَ إِلَى اسْمِكَ فِي قَلْبِ وَلِيِّهِ فَيَغْفِرَ لَكَ.

“Love the divine friends of Allah Most High so that they also love you. Indeed, Allah looks (with mercy and compassion) into the hearts of His divine friends, and He may forgive you upon finding your name in the heart of His divine friend (*walī*).”¹

Imam al-Rifāʿī has elucidated a beautiful point pertaining to love, which is a basic foundation of Islam, that it is a religion of love. According to him, Allah has said in some of His Scriptures:

الْقُلُوبُ بِيَدِي، وَاحْتَبْتُ فِي خَزَائِنِي، فَلَوْلَا حُبِّي لِعَبْدِي مَا قَدَرَ الْعَبْدُ أَنْ
يُحِبَّنِي، وَلَوْلَا ذِكْرِي لَهُ فِي الْأَرْزَلِ مَا قَدَرَ أَنْ يَذْكُرَنِي، وَلَوْلَا إِرَادَتِي إِيَّاهُ فِي
الْقِدَمِ مَا قَدَرَ الْعَبْدُ أَنْ يُرِيدَنِي.

“I have control over all the hearts. Love is one of My treasures. Had I not loved My servant, he would not have been able to love Me. Had I not remembered him in the beginning, he would not have been able to remember Me. Had I not directed My attention to him in the beginning, he would not have been able to turn towards Me.”²

Hence, if our link with Allah is based on love, then the same sentiment should be adopted for promoting and spreading the message of Islam. If Allah, despite being needless and transcendent, loves His creation and expects love from them, then the creation should also follow His divine practice and express love and affection for the humankind.

¹ Set forth by •Ibn al-Jawzī in *Ṣifat al-Safwa*, 4:112. •Ibn al-Mullaqan in *adāʾiq al-Awliyāʾ*, p. 202.

² Set forth by •al-Rifāʿī in *āla ahl al-ḥaqīqa maʿa Allāh*, p. 127.

According to Adra^c al-Sulamī, one night he went into the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to do guard duty. He heard a loud recitation of a man (coming from somewhere). Meanwhile, the Holy Prophet ﷺ also came out. He submitted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the man who was reciting loud sounded pretentious. According to another report, the Companion (it is also said that the Companion submitted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by saying that his parents might be sacrificed for the Holy Prophet ﷺ and then) asked if the person reciting loud is showy. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied by saying: God forbid (never)! He is ʿAbd Allāh Dhū al-Bijādīn.

After a few days, Dhū al-Bijādīn passed away. At his funeral, the Prophet addressed the noble Companions:

ارْفُقُوا بِهِ رَفَقَ اللَّهُ بِهِ، إِنَّهُ كَانَ يُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ. قَالَ: وَحَفَرَ حُفْرَتَهُ.
فَقَالَ: أَوْسِعُوا لَهُ أَوْسَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ. فَقَالَ بَعْضُ أَصْحَابِهِ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ،
لَقَدْ حَزِنْتَ عَلَيْهِ. فَقَالَ: أَجَلُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ يُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.

“Be gentle with your brother; Allah will also be gentle to him, for he used to love Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. When they dug his grave, the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Widen his grave, for Allah too will widen it.’ The Companions submitted: O Allah’s Messenger ﷺ! “You have felt grief over his demise,” The Prophet said ﷺ: “Yes, because he loved Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.”¹

1.10 RAISING THE PROPHETS ﷺ IS A MANIFESTATION OF ALLAH’S LOVE FOR HIS CREATION

Raising the Prophets among various communities of the world is also one of the manifestations of Allah’s love for his creation. It is also His practice and decree that He does not chastise any nation for their sins

¹ •Aḥmad b. anbal in *al-Musnad*, 4:337 §18992. •Ibn Mājah in *al-Sunan*, *Kitāb al-janāʿiz* [The Book of Funeral Rites], chapter, “What has come to us regarding digging the grave,” 1:497 §1559. •Ibn Abī ʿĀsim in *al-Āḥād wa al-Mathānī*, 4:348 §2382. •Ibn ʿibbān in *al-Thiqāt*, 2:99. •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ*, 9:52 §9111. •al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-Imān*, 1:417 §583.

and bad deeds until a Prophet is raised amongst them to deliver the divine message of love and compassion. Allah has revealed:

﴿وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّى نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا﴾

﴿And We do not torment (any people) at all until We send a Messenger (to them).﴾^I

It is expounded that it is Allah's sublime mercy that He sends His Messengers to people to provide them guidance, for He wants to protect His creation from any torment. It is the evidence of His love that He does not want the people to undergo any torment, and He raises His exalted servants amongst them to make them tread the path of righteousness.

1.11 THE HOLY PROPHET'S ﷺ ATTRIBUTES AND EXCELLENCE MANIFEST LOVE

There are countless aspects of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ exalted attributes and excellence and his esteemed status which are evident from his 99 noble names. All these names reflect a single glory: the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the embodiment of love and mercy. He has been sent as a mercy and his instinct of love and compassion encompasses all the worlds and is not meant for Muslims alone. Hence, every world and every creation of each world benefits from his mercy. As for the believers, he ardently desires for their guidance and deliverance and is merciful and clement to them, as has been revealed in the Qur'an;

﴿لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

﴿Surely, a (Glorious) Messenger from amongst yourselves has come to you. Your suffering and distress (becomes) grievously heavy on him (ﷺ). (O mankind,) he is ardently desirous of your (betterment and guidance. And) he is most

^I Qur'an, 17:15.

(deeply) clement and merciful to the believers.﴾¹

His love and compassion, especially for his own community, is unfathomable. He takes to his heart the sufferings which distress people. He feels their sorrows and agony as his. He wishes every goodness and betterment for humans. Also, he is more caring than we are for ourselves.

﴿النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ﴾

﴿This (Esteemed) Prophet is nearer to and has a greater claim on the believers than their own souls.﴾²

It refers to our own souls, which are far from ourselves, while the Holy Prophet ﷺ is far nearer to our souls. When in trouble, the Prophet ﷺ of mercy feels our pain earlier than we do, for the Qur'ān says that he is nearer to you than your own souls through his feelings, love, compassion, mercy, intercession, mediation and attention.

Thus, it is established that love prevails in the sight of Allah; His Messenger ﷺ is an embodiment of love and Islam is also based on love. Therefore, when compassion, mercy, love and easiness prevails, then there is no place for coercion, barbarism and terrorism in the Islamic law and teachings.

1.12 THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE PROPHET'S ﷺ MERCY PERMEATES WITH THE MESSAGE OF LOVE

Allah's sustenance is the manifestation of His love for all the universe. In a similar vein, the Prophet's ﷺ mercy is also an expression of his love for the whole universe. Allah has described Himself in the Qur'ān as *Rabb al-ālamīn* (Lord of all the worlds) and illustrated His Prophet's ﷺ love for humankind as *rahma lil ālamīn* (the mercy for all the worlds) and has not described the Holy Prophet ﷺ anywhere in the Qur'ān as *rahma lil muslimīn* (mercy for Muslims) only. Whether people believe in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ or belie them, the love of

¹ Ibid., 9:128.

² Ibid., 33:6.

Allah and His Messenger ﷺ does not diminish. When you put the love of both of them together, it is Islam. It is proven that the mercy that Islam has brought to the world is not only meant for the Muslims; it benefits the whole of the universe.

Allah Most High has demonstrated His sustenance and the mercy of His exalted Messenger ﷺ to all the worlds. It connotes that He is the Lord of all the worlds while His Messenger ﷺ is also a mercy and love for all the worlds. That is the universalism of divine love.

With the introduction of the glory of His sustenance and His Prophet's global mercy, and universalism, Allah Most High has given the message to humankind in general, and the Muslim community in particular, that if they are His true servants, and if they wish to enlighten their hearts, inner selves, intellects, minds and thoughts with the light of His servitude, then they must immerse their souls in the bounties of His sustenance, which is His expression of love. And they must also instil love and mercy into their hearts and bring about a change in their inner selves. One has to imbue inside all the manifestations of divine love and the Prophet's ﷺ mercy and compassion. In this way, a person can become a source of bounties for the whole world, irrespective of all personal, regional, racial and linguistic biases, even above the limited sectarian and religious commitments, to demonstrate the universal love for humankind. Love, mercy and compassion of Allah's real servant must be available for the whole universe, like Allah has spread His sustenance and love for the whole of universe.

1.13 LOVE AND KINDNESS FOR NON-MUSLIMS

Allah ﷻ is the Lord of the whole of the universe. He provides for, and cures, even those who do not believe in Him. They worship idols—Lāt, Manāt, 'Uzzā, Shiva, Brahma and other false deities and images. Allah ﷻ does not ask them to beg from those deities they worship. Rather, His mercy and sustenance is for everyone indiscriminately. Similarly, the conduct of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the same for the disbelievers and idolaters. His shower of mercy equally benefits those who are in His obedience and even those who raised swords at him and banished him from his homeland, Mecca.

While entering the city on the evening of the conquest of Mecca, Sa'd b. 'Ubāda ﷺ loudly proclaimed:

الْيَوْمَ يَوْمُ الْمَلْحَمَةِ.

"Today is the day of battle."¹

After a while, Abū Sufyān conveyed the words of Sa'd b. 'Ubāda to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, upon which the Holy Prophet ﷺ stood up and said:

لَا، الْيَوْمَ يَوْمُ الْمَرْحَمَةِ.

"No, today is (not the day of avenge but) a day of Mercy."²

1.14 IF YOU SEEK MERCY, THEN LOVE

When we study Islamic teachings from any aspect, we will find them predominantly permeated with love, mercy, compassion, kindness, convenience, benevolence, forgiveness and forbearance. It seems these traits are all Islam. Certainly, we do not find such mercy and compassion like this in any of the world religions, philosophies or in any system except Islam. Alas! We have given up the study of Islam and we do not understand Islam. As a result, we have lost the cognizance, practice and love of Islam. Devoid of love, our link with Islam has weakened and we are distant from its truth.

Not only are Islam and faith based on love, but all its links and relations as well are based on love. Our link with Allah ﷻ is based on love; so our link with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also based on love. Everything is subservient to love. It is not useless to say that the fundamental of relation is love and the fundamental of faith is premised on love. Love seeds faith; it is the basis of faith and it is also its climax.

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Maghāzī* [The Book of Military Expeditions], chapter: "Where the Prophet fixed the standard on the Day of the Conquest," 4:1559 §4030.

² Set forth by •al-Shāfi'ī in *Tārīkh Madīna Damishq*, 23:454. •Abd al-Barr in *al-Istī'āb*, 2:597. •al-Shawkānī in *Nayl al-Awtār*, 8:168.

The Qur'ān has frequently underscored obedience to and love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

﴿(O Beloved!) Say: 'If you love Allah, follow me. Allah will then take you as (His) beloved, and forgive you your sins for you, and Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.'﴾¹

According to this Qur'ānic verse, the evidence of the love of Allah is declared by obedience to the Prophet ﷺ. This obedience to the Prophet ﷺ causes a servant to be included among Allah's favourites and be given the glad tidings of the forgiveness of sins.

While the obedience to and love for Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ are grandly rewarded, the Qur'ān has also revealed that at the same time there is a promise of torment to those who do not love Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ more than all the worldly relations of love. Allah says:

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ﴾

﴿(O Esteemed Messenger!) Say: 'If your fathers (and forefathers) and your sons (and daughters) and your brothers (and sisters) and your wives and your (other) kith and kin and the riches that you have earned (so hard) and the trade and business that you fear may decline and the homes you are fond of are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) and struggling in His cause, then wait until Allah brings His command (of torment). And Allah does

¹ Qur'ān, 3:31.

*not guide the disobedient.*¹

This Qur'ānic verse acquaints us with the true connotations of love. It also warns us to perceive the truth of love, lest we claim our ardent love for Allah and His Messenger while in reality our inclination of love is towards material pursuits which overpowers our leanings. Such a dualism is not admissible in the valley of love. Rather it foments failure and loss. According to Anas رضي الله عنه, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has ordained the believers for the supremacy of his love to this extent:

لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ وَالِدِهِ وَوَلَدِهِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

“None of you truly believes, unless I am dearer to him than his parents, his children and people altogether.”²

Is there anyone other than the Messenger of Mercy in this universe of mankind whose love, mercy, compassion, benevolence and bestowal is at this supreme level, where in a state of either extreme grief or rage, his patience overcomes and his mercy encompasses the whole mankind? And he does not step back for a single moment from his exalted station, for he is ‘not sent but as a mercy for all the worlds’. He is unequivocally perfect and there is no chance of doubt in his perfection. Therefore, in his injunctions, his love would continue to prevail in his mode of conduct and thinking.

Mother of the believers, ‘Ā'isha رضي الله عنها, reported Allah’s Messenger ﷺ supplicated,

اللَّهُمَّ، مَنْ وَلِيَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي شَيْئًا فَشَقَّ عَلَيْهِمْ، فَاشَقُّ عَلَيْهِ، وَمَنْ وَلِيَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي شَيْئًا فَفَرَّقَ بِهِمْ، فَارْفُقْ بِهِ.

¹ Ibid., 9:24.

² Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: “Love of the Messenger a is a part of faith,” 1:14 §15. •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: “The necessity of loving Allah’s Messenger a more than the family, the children, the parents and people altogether,” 1:67 §44.* Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Īmān* [The Book of Faith], chapter: “Love of the Messenger a is a part of faith, 1:14 §14.

“O Allah! Cause distress to him who rules over my Umma and causes them distress, and be gentle to him who rules over my Umma and is gentle to them.”¹

The clement and merciful Messenger of Allah ﷺ has not allowed any ruling authority, ministers, prime ministers, presidents or officers of any level to be harsh with their subordinates. He supplicated Allah: ‘O Lord! Whoever of the rulers commits harshness to the community and tortures them and troubles them unjustly, then You also deal with him severely?’ Then he further submitted: ‘O Allah! If someone is entrusted with the responsibility to govern people and he adopts leniency, love and compassion towards his subordinates then, O Allah, in recompense, You also shower on him Your blessings, leniency, mercy and forgiveness.’

Hence, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ bestowed on his Umma the everlasting principle that if a ruler is gentle and lenient towards his people, then he will be rewarded with leniency and compassion on the Day of Resurrection. However, if he is harsh and stringent towards the servants of Allah and the Umma of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, then he should remember that he will be punished with harshness on the Day of Judgment.

This is the real aspect of Islam, the religion of love. From the injunctions of Allah Most High, in the practices and conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and in all the Islamic teachings, care is attached to human values, human agonies and personal, physical and emotional limitations and its predicaments. What other system and philosophy of life or religion offers this degree of love, moral excellence and humanism that Islam has practically conferred on humankind? Islam has elevated the concern for humanity and human feelings and perceptions to such heights in its teachings in a way that no other philosophy could ever imagine.

It is so unfortunate that we do not comprehend Islam. The secular mind rejects its glory due to ignorance. The claimants of Islam

¹ Set forth by •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Imāra* [The Book of Imperial Authority], chapter: “The excellent merit of the just imam, the chastisement of the despot, the urging of kind treatment of the subjects, and the prohibition of inflicting hardship upon them,” 3/1458 §1828.

project a very dismal picture of the religion due to their ignorance and superficial study of Islam. Due to this reason, this religion of love is brought into disrepute unjustly. Islam is a religion that ordains to shorten the prescribed and sublime act of worship, the ritual prayer, only for the consideration of a mother's feelings when she hears her crying infant in the course of a ritual prayer. How can Islam tolerate the slaughtering of children, the stabbing of people and firing bullets straight into their chests, or burning people's houses, blowing up the inhabitants by suicide bombings and butchering the innocent women, children, the elderly and the sick? Which Islam and which Qur'ān do those who call themselves Muslims and perpetrate these atrocities, carnage and bloodshed believe in? They are the ones who call their self-styled beliefs as Islamic and distort the true religion. In reality, they are the enemies of Islam who are completely ignorant of Islam's love, subtleties, mercy, compassion, blessings and glory. However, the Messenger of Islam ﷺ always taught his noble Companions love, balance, moderation, easiness, convenience and excellent morality. He always forbade partiality, extremism, radicalism and violence.

1.15 LOVE AS THE RECOMPENSE OF PREACHING THE FAITH THROUGH MESSENGERSHIP

The Prophet ﷺ wished love for his family in recompense of preaching the faith through his Messengership. The Qur'ān has revealed:

﴿قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ﴾

﴿Say: 'I do not ask for any recompense for this (preaching the faith in Messengership), but (seek) love for (my) kindred (and Allah's nearness).'¹﴾

O people! I do not ask for any reward for myself for guiding you on the right path. However, for your benefit, I wish you to love my kindred so that you maintain a link with me and enjoy favours of my guidance uninterrupted. The fountain that will spring out due to my kindred's love will benefit you immensely.

¹ Qur'ān, 42:23.

The expression, *al-mawadda*, in the above verse has been used in this verse for the Prophet's kindred. For the Companions, divine friends of Allah and for the righteous and the sincere, the Qur'an has revealed on another occasion:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا﴾

﴿Surely, those who believed and did pious deeds, the Most Kind (Lord) will create love for them in the hearts (of the people).﴾¹

This Qur'anic verse has unfolded that the servants who affirm faith, perform righteous deeds and please Almighty Allah to attain His nearness are those for whom Allah inculcates love into their hearts. Therefore, if a person loves a saint, it is due to Allah's will, for He has imbued love for His divine friend in that person's heart. If a person's heart is devoid of the love of the saints, the righteous, the believers, the God-fearing or the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his kindred and the favoured ones, it is due to the fact that Allah has not selected the heart of this unfortunate one for pure love. According to 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

أَحِبُّوا اللَّهَ لِمَا يَغْذُوكُمْ مِنْ نِعَمِهِ، وَأَحِبُّونِي بِحُبِّ اللَّهِ. وَأَحِبُّوا أَهْلَ بَيْتِي حُبِّي.

"Love Allah for the favours He provides for you, love me because of the love of Allah and love my family because of the love of me."²

The followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who love Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, act upon the practice of Allah. Allah fills their hearts

¹ Ibid., 19:96.

² Set forth by •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Manāqib* [The Book of Virtues] according to Allah's Messenger a, chapter: "The excellent merits of the household of the Prophet," 5:664 §3789. •al- ākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 3:162 §4716. •al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 3:46 §2639 & 10:281 §10664. •al-Bayhaqī in *Shu'ab al-Imān*, 1:366 §408.

with love for His exalted servants. If we find someone with ardent love for the divine friends of Allah, then Allah has welled it up in their hearts. Contrarily, the hearts devoid of love are the hearts not chosen by Allah for the pious love.

Therefore, people who feel irritated in the name of love do not hate it by their own will. Their hearts are kept void because of their own sinful deeds. Since they are deprived of love, they criticize love. Their hearts are polluted with worldly love and are not worthy of pure love. For instance, unclean utensils are not used for milk. They are used after they are cleansed. If a common person does not put his drinks into an unclean pot, then why will the Lord of the universe put His love in an impure heart that does not want to be cleansed?

According to Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا، نَادَى جِبْرِيلُ: إِنِّي قَدْ أَحْبَبْتُ فُلَانًا فَأَحِبَّهُ، قَالَ: فَيُنَادِي فِي السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ تَنْزِلُ لَهُ الْمَحَبَّةُ فِي أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ، فَذَلِكَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ: ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا﴾ [مريم، ٩١/١٩]، وَإِذَا أَبْغَضَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا نَادَى جِبْرِيلُ: إِنِّي قَدْ أَبْغَضْتُ فُلَانًا، فَيُنَادِي فِي السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ تَنْزِلُ لَهُ الْبَغْضَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ.

“If Allah loves a servant, He calls Gabriel (and tells him): ‘I love so-and-so, so you must love him!’ Gabriel will proclaim to the people of heaven, and then love for him is placed in the earth as God says: *﴿Surely, those who believed and did pious deeds, the Most Kind (Lord) will create love for them in the hearts (of the people).﴾*¹ when Allah abhors a slave, He calls Gabriel, ‘I hate so-and-so,’ so the angel calls to the people of heaven and then hatred for him is placed in the earth.”²

¹ Qur’ān, 19:96.

² Set forth by •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Tafsīr* [The Book of Interpretation], chapter: “From the Sūra of Maryam,” 5:317 §3161.

1.16 THE NON-SPECIFIC, SPECIFIC AND GRAND INTERCESSION ARE ALSO A MANIFESTATION OF LOVE

Thawbān رضي الله عنه narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: "I begged my Lord: 'O my Lord! Protect my Umma from the severe and deadly torments that You used to inflict on earlier nations in this world and destroyed them: by famine, drowning in oceans, domination by enemies, raining stones and disfiguring their faces, due to the excess in their ignorance and oppressions.'"

Upon this submission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Allah has bestowed exclusive properties on him that none of the Prophets ever received before.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ زَوَى لِي الْأَرْضَ، فَرَأَيْتُ مَشَارِقَهَا وَمَغَارِبَهَا، وَإِنَّ أُمَّتِي سَيَبْلُغُ مُلْكُهَا مَا زُوِيَ لِي مِنْهَا، وَأُعْطِيتُ الْكَزْنَينِ الْأَحْمَرَ وَالْأَبْيَضَ، وَإِنِّي سَأَلْتُ رَبِّي لِأُمَّتِي أَنْ لَا يُهْلِكَهَا بَسَنَةٌ عَامَّةٌ، وَأَنْ لَا يُسَلِّطَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَدُوًّا مِنْ سِوَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ، فَيَسْتَبِيحَ بَيْضَتَهُمْ، وَإِنَّ رَبِّي قَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ إِنِّي إِذَا قَضَيْتُ قَضَاءً فَإِنَّهُ لَا يُرَدُّ، وَإِنِّي أُعْطِيتُكَ لِأُمَّتِكَ أَنْ لَا أَهْلِكَهُمْ بَسَنَةٌ عَامَّةٌ، وَأَنْ لَا أُسَلِّطَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَدُوًّا مِنْ سِوَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ، يَسْتَبِيحَ بَيْضَتَهُمْ، وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعَ عَلَيْهِمْ مَنْ بِأَقْطَارِهَا - أَوْ قَالَ مَنْ بَيْنَ أَقْطَارِهَا - حَتَّى يَكُونَ بَعْضُهُمْ يَهْلِكُ بَعْضًا، وَيَسْبِي بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah drew the ends of the world near one another for my sake and I saw its eastern and western ends. And the dominion of my Umma would reach those ends which have been drawn near me, and I have been granted the red and the white treasure, and I begged my Lord for my Umma that it should not be destroyed because of famine, nor be dominated by an enemy who is not amongst them to take their lives and destroy them root and branch, and my Lord said: 'O Muhammad! 'Whenever I make a decision, there is none to change it. I grant you for

your Umma that it would not be destroyed by famine and it would not be dominated by an enemy who would not be amongst it and would take their lives and destroy them root and branch, even if all the people from the different parts of the world join hands together (for this purpose); but it would be from amongst them, (in other words) your Umma, that some people would kill the others or imprison the others.”¹

This supplication submitted to Allah ﷻ by the Messenger ﷺ is an expression of his love for his Umma. He does not want his community to undergo any form of trouble and worry.

1.17 THE DESIRE OF LOVE IN THE SUPPLICATIONS OF THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ

The passion of love is such a desire that whenever the Messenger of Allah ﷺ raised his hands for supplication to Allah ﷻ, he would submit his longing for His love. Not only this but he would even pray for the love of His favourite servants. Therefore, his supplications were a desire for love. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yazīd Khaṭmī narrates that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ used to include these words in his supplications:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ يَنْفَعُنِي حُبُّهُ عِنْدَكَ. اللَّهُمَّ، مَا رَزَقْتَنِي مِمَّا أُحِبُّ فَاجْعَلْهُ قُوَّةً لِي فِي مِمَّا أُحِبُّ. اللَّهُمَّ، وَمَا رَوَيْتَ عَنِّي مِمَّا أُحِبُّ فَاجْعَلْهُ لِي قُوَّةً فِي مِمَّا أُحِبُّ.

“O Allah! Provide me with Your love and the love of those whose love will benefit me in Your sight. O Allah! Make the things I love, which You have provided me, a strength for me in Your love. O Allah! Divert my attention from the things I love, which You have turned away from me, to the love of those things You like for my coolness.”²

¹ Set forth by •Muslim, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Fitan wa Ashrāʾ al-Sāʿa* [The Book of Troubles and the Portents of the Final Hour], chapter: “The mutual destruction of the members of this *Umma* (Community),” 4/2215 §2889.

² Set forth by •al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Daʿawāt* [The Book of

The supplication for love was not the practice of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ alone. The Prophets ﷺ preceding him also used to beg Allah ﷻ for His love. Abū al-Dardā' narrates in one of his reports that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said among the supplications of the Prophet Dāwūd ﷺ, one supplication is:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ حُبَّكَ، وَحُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ، وَالْعَمَلَ الَّذِي يُبَلِّغُنِي حُبَّكَ،
اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ نَفْسِي وَأَهْلِي، وَمِنْ الْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ.

“O Allah! I ask You for Your love, the love of those who love You, and the deeds which will cause me to attain Your love. O Allah! Make Your love dearer to me than myself, my family and cold water.”¹

The narrators reported that whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned the Prophet Dāwūd ﷺ, and reported a piece of news about him, he said: “He was the most devout worshipper.”

1.18 FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF ISLAMIC LAW ARE BASED ON LOVE AND MERCY

The provision of ease and comfort is the basis of all the Islamic laws, teachings and commandments. Even today, if the commandments of Shariah are implemented in any state, they will be implemented in the light of the foundational principles: the removal of pain and loss, with gradation or abrogation. If legislation is accomplished by avoiding these principles, then that would be against Islam and Islamic law. The reason is that love, mercy, compassion and ease are the spirit of all these principles. Since the teachings of Islam rest on love, the status of founding principles is applicable to those laws which demonstrate clearly the love for humankind.

Supplications], chapter (73), 5:523 §3491. •Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-Muṣannaf*, 6:76 §29592. •Ibn al-Mubārak in *al-Zuhd*, p. 144 §430.

¹ Set forth by • al-Tirmidhī in *al-Sunan: Kitāb al-Da'awāt* [The Book of Supplications], chapter (73), 5:522 §3490. •al- ākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 2:470 §3621. •al-Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdaws*, 3:271 §4810.

1.18.1 THE PROPHET'S ﷺ LIKING FOR GENTLENESS AND EASINESS AS A SIGN OF LOVE

According to Abū Barza al-Aslamī, he went on six, seven or eight expeditions with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and spent most of his time in the blessed company of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. During that whole period, he noticed one significant aspect of the conduct of the Messenger ﷺ.

شَهِدْتُ تَيْسِيرَهُ.

"I witness how he made things easy."¹

Facilitating his Umma would always be his priority; he would be concerned about how he could provide easiness and convenience to his Umma. This was a salient feature of all his actions, thoughts, commands and exhortations. The supreme conduct of providing easiness to others is evidence that a person loves his addressees and cannot see them in trouble.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ would adopt the easy practice to remove the apprehension of its abandonment and to inspire people to follow it persistently. In case a practice is difficult, the doer may discontinue it after a while. To make a practice everlasting and durable, the Prophet ﷺ would wish to choose the easier of the two. This mode of conduct establishes that the Prophet ﷺ always sought ease and facility for his Umma; this is a mark of his infinite love for his community.

In actual fact, Islam is a *Dīn* of only ease and facilitation. To open the door of easiness and gentleness is only possible through love. All the Prophetic teachings, commands, priorities and laws are premised on love, mercy, compassion, convenience and easiness. There is no room for radicalism in Islam. Nor does it allow narrow-mindedness, bias, coercion, or any form of extremism to operate.

يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا، وَيَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُنْفِرُوا.

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Jumu'a* [The Book of the Friday Congregational Prayer], chapter: "If an animal runs off while someone is at prayer, Qatada said: 'If someone's garment is stolen, he should leave the prayer and pursue the thief,'" 1:405 §1153.

Make things easy and do not make things difficult. Give glad tidings and do not make people feel aversion.¹

The message is to manage ease and facility in every step of invitation to religion, and never adopt harshness and coercion from preaching to the implementation of religion. This message of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is from the noble Companions to everyone: the flag bearers of religion until the Last Day, all the scholars of Islam, preachers and all the workers who are engaged in the promotion of religion. We should present our religion in a manner that people find it as a bringer of glad tidings which pleases their hearts. We must not spread the message of religion in such a way that rouses hatred towards religion. This hadith report provides clear guidance towards the system of education we need to develop today. In the present time, Islam is being blamed for violence and extremism. This hadith evidently, elaborately and clearly renounces and condemns violence and extremism and proves that Islam, from its dawn fifteen centuries ago to date, is a religion of love, leniency, compassion and mercy.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ bestowed these messages of love on the Muslim Umma in particular and humankind in general fifteen hundred years ago, though we have not followed Islamic teachings in letter and spirit, nor have we attempted to learn the true teachings of Islam from any scholar of authority on Prophetic teachings. This has resulted in extremism and violence in the name of Islam. Those who are doing it are in fact promoting non-religiousness—not Qur'ān and Islam.

Allah, our Sustainer and Almighty, is the one who loves us most; He is forgiving, merciful, affectionate and kind. Then, why are we, His servants, not kind to His servants and are merciless towards them? Why are we ruthless, callous hearted and unjust, and wanting to colour our hands with the blood of others though we have the Prophetic teachings

¹ Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-ʿIlm* [The Book of Knowledge], chapter: "On the Prophet a Being Careful about Giving People Admonition and Knowledge Lest They Feel Aversion to It," 1:38 §69; •Muslim in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ: Kitāb al-Jihād wa al-siyar* [The Book of the Striving and Military Expeditions], chapter: "The Command to Make Things Easy and Not Making Others Feel Aversion," 3:1359 §1734.

to love and show mercy? Why have we chosen to tread the path of terrorism? Where and how have we lost the gentleness in our nature and the compassion and kindness in our humanism that Allah ﷻ has endowed us with? Where have the elements of love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, easiness and convenience vanished from our mould?

The teachings of Islam intend to inculcate in our character and conduct the attributes of forgiveness and forbearance, love and care, kindness and generosity, mercy and compassion.

1.18.2 ISLAM DID NOT SPREAD BY THE SWORD!

What atrocities and tortures did the disbelievers and idolaters of Mecca not inflict on our exalted Messenger? They stoned him, imposed aggression on him, wielded swords against him, made him bleed; ostracized and banished him and conspired an attempt on his life as well. However, he always felt concerned and worried for them. Allah said:

﴿فَلَعَلَّكَ بَنِيعٌ تَفْسَكَ عَلَىٰ ءَاثَرِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا﴾

﴿(O Venerable Beloved!) Will you put your (dear) life at stake with the traumatic grief for them if they do not put faith in this Word (of Allah)?﴾¹

This kind, love-laden and merciful conduct of Allah's exalted Messenger ﷺ is not meant for Muslims alone. He is equally the embodiment of mercy and compassion for disbelievers and idolaters. This is the reason why all his blessed life the Holy Prophet ﷺ never raised a sword to coerce any soul to embrace Islam, and neither did his noble Companions wield a sword for that purpose. The responsibility of all the battles in the Prophet's period lies on the disbelievers and other enemies of Islam who themselves launched aggression against him and used to torture and butcher the Muslims and subject them to extreme forms of terrorism.

For instance, examine the battle of Badr. The Meccan disbelievers and polytheists invaded Medina. The Muslims had to fight a defensive war for their survival. Again, for the second time in the Battle of

¹ Qur'ān, 18:6.

Uḥud, the Meccan troops invaded Medina and made the bottom of Mount Uḥud the battlefield. The Muslims were bound to engage them in the outskirts of Medina for defence. Similarly, the third time the Muslims planned to dig a trench around Medina to defend against the confederates who launched an offensive attack with an outnumbering military might. That was called the Battle of Trench or the Battle of Confederates.

Hence, all wars fought in the Prophet's period were defensive wars, whether they were caused by a breach of treaty by Jews, or by the invasion of idolaters and other tribal forces. Even the conquest of Mecca transpired as a result of the breach of the 10-year Peace Treaty of Udaybiya by the disbelievers of Mecca, who were preparing to attack the Muslims of Medina. The battle of Khaybar also resulted out of the violation of the Medina Treaty by the Jews after two years, when they gathered the tribes and armies to attack the people of Islam.

The historical event of the conquest of Mecca is a great sign of Prophetic teachings on peace, love and forgiveness. It did not cost even a drop of blood because the Holy Prophet ﷺ announced general amnesty for the Meccans and declared after entering Mecca:

1. Whosoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān is accorded protection;
2. Whoever surrenders is protected;
3. The disbelievers and idolaters who close the doors of their houses are safe;
4. Those who signal from outside of the closing of the door are also safe.

The demonstration of this esteemed conduct is inconceivable and unimaginable in the modern world. Through his conduct, the Holy Prophet ﷺ proved to humankind that his superior love, mercy and forgiveness is even for the disbelievers, enemies and invaders.

1.18.3 LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD—THE IDENTITY OF BELIEVERS

Allah has ordained the members of the Muslim society to acquire noble character traits such as love, well-wishing and welfare for each other; nobody should harm and torture others, nor should anyone insult and wrong others. Everybody must be provider of betterment, goodness,

prosperity, benefits and comforts to others. Allah says:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ﴾

﴿The truth is that (all) believers are brothers (to one another).﴾¹

The glory of the believers lies in brotherhood. They do not subject each other to torture, coercion, oppression, terrorism and vandalism. Nor do they usurp one another's wealth or are thirsty for each other's blood; rather, they are brothers to each other's. They protect and love each other's and hide each other's fault, wrongs and weaknesses. The definition of a believer in the Qur'ān is described by use of the word of restriction, *innamā*, which categorizes that Muslims are only those in whom brotherhood is evident. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, through the the Pact of Brotherhood, made a link of brotherhood between the immigrants and the residents of Medina. Until a practical glimpse of the same brotherhood is depicted in the lives of Muslims, they cannot fulfil the standards of faith set by the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ānic standard of faith terms that the believers are only the ones who have love and brotherhood for each other's more than a brother has. Unfortunately, our character falls too far short of the standard. We are thirsty for each others' blood like hounds. We are worse than beasts. The Qur'ān, on the contrary, terms that believers are only those whose fraternity and mutual love and affection are evidenced to be at perfection. The Qur'ān enjoins that if the believers fight with each other and distant themselves, then:

﴿فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ﴾

﴿So make peace between your two brothers.﴾²

Do not break up with one another; rather, unite. Islam is to unite and not to segregate. One should be fearful of Allah ﷻ for deeds that cause dissension so that one may be shown mercy. Only those who live like brothers deserve Allah's love and mercy.

¹ Ibid., 49:10.

² Ibid., 49:10.

1.18.4 AMBIT OF LOVE ENCOMPASSES NON-MUSLIMS

“Islam is a religion of love.” Its ambit of love encompasses both Muslims and non-Muslims. One manifestation of Islam as the religion of love is that there is no coercion in it. Allah has revealed:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ﴾

﴿There is no compulsion in Dīn (Religion).﴾¹

This verse is describing a reality. This verse has established the foundational characteristic of the teachings of Islam, its injunctions and legislation. Also, it establishes without a shadow of doubt that Islam is not based on coercion nor harshness. Therefore, any internal matters amongst Muslims or those relating to the non-Muslims at the external level do not admit of coercion and compulsion because they are not part of Islam. Our duty is to deliver the message of Islam to everyone with love and devotion.

Allah has made it clear that when we invite someone to Islam and convey its message, we should leave it to the listener to freely decide whether he wants to accept or reject the call. Neither an individual nor an organization nor even the government has the authority to proselytize the non-Muslim citizens by force. Nor does Islam allow one to demolish the places of worship of the non-Muslims, make them feel scared through terrorism and compel them to accept Islam. This conduct is non-Islamic at its outset.

As for Muslims, they are to be persuaded to fully acquaint themselves with Islamic teachings so that love, mercy, compassion, ease and facility settle in their minds, because none of Islam’s aspects are against human nature and disposition.

1.19 AFTERWORD

All the preceding verses of the Qur’ān and the hadith reports demonstrate that love is the basis of *Dīn*. Love twinkles from all of its teachings. Allah, His Messenger ﷺ, the Qur’ān and hadith prominently impart to us only one thing—love everyone.

¹ Ibid., 2:256.

Islam truly is the religion of love. All its injunctions and teachings convey only one message—the message of love and mercy. The servant's link with Allah is based on love; the Umma's relation with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is based on love. The link with the noble Companions and the exalted kindred of the Prophet is based on love. One's relationship with the divine friends of Allah and the pious is based on love. The relation with the young is established upon love. The link with the creation of Allah is based on love. Love changes its forms and shapes, from person to person. Some love changes into veneration and etiquette, some love transforms into affection and brotherhood. It appears according to the relationship involved.

In brief, if we put together love, peace and knowledge in its real sense, they form Islam. Islam eliminated hatred through love, terrorism through peace and ignorance through knowledge. These three are the miracles that are everlasting and will remain alive until the Day of Resurrection, and the whole of humanity will benefit from this fountain gushing forth for people. Today, from the East to the West and from the United Nation to the European Union, all progress and advancement owe themselves to love, peace and knowledge. That is indeed possible due to the Prophet's mediation.

Attempts are being made by adversaries and imprudent friends at international level to sully the sacred and bright face of Islam, which is misleading the young generation. Alas! Today the hatred and malice, bloodshed and massacre, extremism and terrorism are ascribed to Islam. In truth, they were no way connected with Islam in the past, nor are they in the present nor will they be in the future. Islam is meant to obliterate all of them. Terrorism ruled before the raising of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Defeating this rule of terrorism by means of love, Islam has bestowed on humankind the system of love, peace and knowledge.